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Nixon Vows To Find Watergate Solution

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Nixon told Republican campaign contributors Wednesday night he will get to the bottom of the Watergate scandal and not let it keep him from making "the next four years better than the last four years."

Nixon addressed a $1,000-a-plate fund-raising dinner for the 1974 congressional campaign. Planners said the turnout was far below what had been expected.

"I had been hearing that this would be less than an enthusiastic dinner tonight," Nixon said. "And you have proved that perhaps the critics were wrong."

Nixon said he is keenly aware of concern among Republicans and the public in general about the Watergate developments but pledged he is meeting the issue head-on.

"I can assure you that we will get to the bottom of this deplorable incident," the President said.

But in an oblique reference to mounting publicity over the White House scandal, Nixon said the issue should be resolved in the courts.

"An individual—even a government official—is innocent until he is proven guilty," Nixon said.

He said he won a clear mandate in last year's landslide election and intends to follow it up regardless of the Watergate case.

"We are not going to allow this deplorable incident to deter or detract us from going ahead and achieving the great goals the overwhelming number of Americans elected us to achieve in 1972," Nixon said.

The President said the electorate had "a clear choice" in his 1972 presidential campaign against Democrat George McGovern and that the same distinctions on domestic and international issues still exist.

"We will respond to go forward now and achieve it," he said. "I can assure you that we will do that. We're going to make the next four years better than the last four years."

The President mentioned plans for a new Soviet-American summit later this year and said he would continue "building a more peaceful world."

Officially the crowd at the dinner was estimated at about 1,000 paying guests, which would mean a $1-million gross at $1,000 a plate, But congressional campaign-committee sources said privately the gross may be a disappointing $750,000 to $800,000. The normal take for these off-election-year Republican galas has been about $1.4 million.

Nixon told the crowd that "I have had as you know political ups and downs during my 27 years in politics ... I have known times when I wondered if I had any friends."

Then he added:

"I don't stand here tonight as a loser. We stand here tonight as winners and we are going to win again together."